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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 002360

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: POLITICAL PARTY "BANDH" WIDELY OBSERVED

REF: A. KATHMANDU 2318

[¶](#)B. KATHMANDU 2229

Classified By: Amb. James F. Moriarty, Reason 1.4 (b/d)

Party-Called Bandh a Success

[¶](#)1. (C) The Seven Party Alliance pulled off a broadly successful general closure ("bandh") of transportation, schools, factories, and shops in the Kathmandu Valley on October 28 to protest the stringent new media ordinance and the Government's action against Kantipur FM radio station (reflets). October 27 newspapers had front-paged the announcement of the bandh, and as a result, most shops were closed and there were few vehicles on the roads. The Parties' mass meeting mid-afternoon in Kathmandu's Durbar Square attracted 1500 people, according to police sources. The demonstrators told us they planned to disburse after the meeting without attempting to enter any restricted areas. The bandh was scheduled to be over by the evening of October [¶](#)28.

Arrests Dampen Bandh; Little Violence

[¶](#)2. (C) By late afternoon, the Bandh had not become overly violent. Police had forestalled the demonstrators by arresting almost two dozen student leaders engaged in a publicity campaign for the bandh the evening of October 27. (According to the police, all were released the morning of October 28.) According to press reports, the alliance mobilized hundreds of party activists to enforce the strike. However, according to Nepali Congress and CPN-UML party officials, police had arrested over 100 political cadre, including political leaders during the course of October 28. (The police admitted to arresting 81.) Early on the morning of the bandh, police arrested party cadre while they were trying to force shop-owners to close their businesses. Police sources told us that eight vehicles were vandalized during the bandh, including two government vans.

Business Critical of Bandh

[¶](#)3. (C) According to the press, representatives of tourism and business associations had urged the Parties to withdraw the bandh because of its impact on tourism and the economy. These representatives had suggested there were other ways to protest than calling bandhs.

Comment

[¶](#)4. (C) The political parties were hoping to make a big impression with their first bandh since the King's February 1 takeover. They will likely be very pleased with the light traffic, closure of most businesses, and relative lack of violence. Businesses worry that the parties will want to build on the success by calling additional bandhs in the near future. We believe the public's tolerance for bandhs, no matter who calls them, will be short-lived.

[¶](#)5. (C) The Maoist-affiliated student union has called a transportation bandh for mid-afternoon of October 29, seemingly in an attempt to piggy-back on the Parties' efforts. That call has not received any publicity, and police expect (and hope) that it will be ignored, like other Maoist-called bandhs in Kathmandu Valley since February 1.

MORIARTY